

Putting a Spin on Cabin Commandments

Spin It

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SUMMARY:	Rather than make a list of “bunk rules”, what if our campers established a cabin community based on shared values and contributions of each community member? Experience this spin on traditional cabin rules and learn how to create a meaningful and authentic cabin identity that will carry throughout camp and after.
TOPIC(S):	Community building, relationship building
LEARNING OBJECTIVE:	Participants will... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Explore what community means to them ● Experience a values-based approach to creating “bunk rules” or “cabin commandments” ● Create a unique cabin identity
AUDIENCE:	One cabin (8-12 kids), any age 8+
TIMING:	Cornerstone program: 20 minutes Camp program: 30-45 minutes
APPENDICES:	None
MATERIALS NEEDED:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Poster paper (at least 1) ● Scratch paper and pens or thin markers (at least 1 per participant) ● Thick markers, variety of colors, for drawing on large paper ● Color copies of Making Menches periodic table (1 for each participant is ideal) https://avikatzorlow.files.wordpress.com/2014/01/making-mensches-periodic-table.pdf
SET-UP DETAILS:	No setup required except to gather materials. Can be done anywhere like inside cabin, meeting room, outside at a picnic table etc.

SESSION TIMELINE & OUTLINE:

Timeline:

00:00 – 00:08 Making Menches Periodic Table

00:08 – 00:20 Creating Our Cabin Identity

Facilitator Note: This activity should be done with your cabin during the first day or night of camp. Assuming that your cabin group has already done icebreakers & name games, you can go straight into this activity and not start with icebreakers. All campers and counselors should know each other's names before beginning this community-building activity.

Introduction & Making Menches (8 min)

At camp we talk a lot about community, but what does that mean to us as a cabin? We're going to spend some time exploring what that means to us. First of all, what is a community? How do we define it? What are some other words for community? (Family, group, team, clique, sorority/fraternity, etc.)

Outside of camp, what are some other communities that you are part of? (Sports teams, youth groups, clubs, classes at school, etc.)

What makes those places function as a community? (Care about the same things. Have something in common. Shared interests.)

In order to begin creating our cabin community, we need to have a set of shared values and recognize that each person brings unique qualities that come together to create our team.

Distribute the Making Mensches periodic table. (PDF version here:

<https://avikatzorlow.files.wordpress.com/2014/01/making-mensches-periodic-table.pdf>)

Explain that this is a chart of *middot* (character traits) that each of us possess. Some of us have more of certain traits than others, and that's totally okay and normal. The beauty of a community is that we each bring our unique personalities and strengths to the group. So, in order to make this cabin the most awesome community, it's important that we share with the group the character traits that we can bring, that we can be champions of. (Give personal example.)

Give participants a few minutes to look at the Making Menschies chart. They can circle the character traits that they feel they can champion in order to narrow it down to 1 or 2. (It's okay to mention that each person has many character traits that they will contribute to this community, but for the sake of this exercise each person will share their top 1.)

Once everyone has chosen their character trait, come back together as a whole group and give each person the opportunity to share the character trait that they will champion. (It's important for the sake of the community that each person has time to share.)

As each person shares, write down their name and character trait on the poster paper or scratch paper. These character traits are the building blocks of your cabin community.

Creating Our Cabin Identity (12 min)

Now that the cabin has created a list of our character traits, we're going to work on creating a cabin identity.

Facilitator's Note: This part will take longer than 12 minutes. During Spin-It we will do a couple as a sample but all of the activities below should be completed with the cabin as a whole in order to achieve the best possible cabin identity and community.

The cabin should work to create the following things together:

- **Team Name** – this can be one word or a few words, in English or any language. It can even be a made up word! Anything that brings your cabin team together (and is appropriate, of course).
- **Slogan** – a short phrase that is a statement of your cabin's values. If the group is having a hard time, think about slogans of popular companies
 - Examples: **Nike**: Just Do It. **Apple**: Think Different. **L'Oreal**: Because You're Worth It. **Subway**: Eat Fresh. **MasterCard**: There are some things money can't buy. For everything else, there's MasterCard. **US Marine Corps**: The Few. The Proud. The Marines.
- **Handshake** – this can be simple or complicated, but it's important that every member of the team is able to take part in this. It should be something that unifies the group.
- **Cheer** – the team cheer can be the same as slogan, but should be able to be recited all together and have some sort of rhythm.

- **Logo** or Word Cloud or Word Cross – draw a logo, crest, or other visual representation that connects to the values on the cabin’s list.
 - Note: If time is limited, this can be done at a later time during a rest period, bedtime, cabin activity period, etc. Once the campers have created a visual representation, their drawings or designs can be used to decorate the cabin, or photocopied and used as stationary on which you can write notes to each camper, or used as the cover of a “cabin yearbook”. Really the sky’s the limit!

Conclude by discussing the activities above that we didn’t have time to do today. Give participants the opportunity to ask questions, share ideas or feelings about using this at camp, or offer feedback. Mention notes below.

ADDITIONAL NOTES FOR BRINGING IT BACK TO CAMP:

Recognizing that each camp may have their own tradition for how to create cabin rules or cabin commandments, this can be used in addition to whatever your camp already has in place.

As a follow-up to this activity, about a week into the session gather the cabin and look at the initial character traits that they shared. If anyone wants to add one, they can share that with the group. Pass out the Making Mensch chart again and this time have campers choose 1 or 2 that they want to improve on personally. At camp we always talk about how we’re building character and helping campers and counselors gain life skills and become better people -- this is a very easy and accessible way to talk to campers about what their learning and how their growing as humans during camp. It’s not a typical camper-counselor conversation at camp but could have a tremendous impact on the campers, the community, and their personal growth.